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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 425th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 22 June 1993, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. KALPAGE

(Sri Lanka)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 47/59 (continued)

1. Mr. YUDIN (Russian Federation) said that the end of the cold war and the emergence of a new world order based on constructive multilateral cooperation had enhanced the role and significance of the United Nations and led to a growing trend to bring to the Organization problems which could be solved only on a multilateral basis. In that context, the question inevitably arose as to whether the Committee's activities were in line with the new realities.
2. His delegation regarded the Committee as one channel for the practical implementation of measures to strengthen security in the Asian and Pacific region as well as the rest of the world and therefore believed that the Committee's work must continue. At the same time, much depended on the willingness of members to make a constructive contribution to enhancing the Committee's effectiveness.
3. The main areas of the Committee's work needed to be clearly identified. The Committee should first determine its view of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. Although the Declaration reflected the realities of the early 1970s, his delegation believed that its main idea - that through regional efforts, supported and strengthened by the actions of the major world Powers and other leading users of the Indian Ocean, peace and security could be strengthened and greater stability and predictability attained in the region - remained valid, as did the concept of combining global and regional approaches to the problem of ensuring peace, security and stability.
4. A realistic approach should be worked out which reflected current conditions and balanced regional and extra-regional interests. At the regional level, agreements should be concluded among States on the non-use of force, respect for territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders, non-interference in internal affairs and the peaceful settlement of disputes. The zone of peace might include measures to limit the arms race in the region and reduce the armed forces of the countries of the region to the levels required to ensure their defence. The countries of the region might identify an appropriate system of monitoring compliance with such agreements. Extra-regional Powers could undertake to respect the status of the zone and consider reducing their military presence in the region. The permanent members of the Security Council could be the guarantors of the zone. Along with military and political measures, cooperation in the socio-economic, scientific and technical, environmental and other fields should be envisaged. At the same time, it would be useful to consider confidence-building measures in the Indian Ocean region.
5. Many of the proposals made in the Committee could serve as a basis for the draft final document of the United Nations Conference on the Indian Ocean. If it became necessary to convert the Committee into a negotiating body for that purpose, his delegation would be prepared to do so.
6. The establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean was inconceivable without the involvement of all the main users of the Indian Ocean, some of whom, unfortunately, were not participating in the Committee's work. Even so, the Committee must continue its active search for concrete solutions. It was to be

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(Mr. Yudin, Russian Federation)

hoped that the progress made would elicit interest in the Committee's work on the part of all users.

7. Mr. MUSUKA (Zambia) recalled that the initiative for the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace had been taken by the Third Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in 1970. The Declaration had addressed the political and security realities of the day, in particular the military bases established in the Indian Ocean by extra-regional Powers in the context of super-Power rivalry during the cold war era. However, its main objective was to enhance the peace and security of the region and secure freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean for all time. Although the international situation had changed, the Declaration was not obsolete. The new situation called for pragmatism and realism; the Committee should seriously consider what practical measures to take in order to move forward. New approaches were needed to address the issues more effectively and diminish any lingering sentiments of mistrust, thereby helping to preserve both regional and international peace and security.

8. It was more than two decades since the General Assembly had called for the convening of a conference on the Indian Ocean. It was ironic that while the Committee had more or less finalized its preparatory work, there was still no demonstrable willingness on the part of some permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean to participate in the Conference. A zone of peace could not be established without their participation and concurrence.

9. It was undeniable that the events of recent years in international relations had had a positive effect on the role of the United Nations in world affairs, a situation reflected in General Assembly resolution 47/59. In keeping with that resolution, the Committee's work should reflect the current international atmosphere, which had enhanced the role of the United Nations in peace-keeping and peacemaking. The attainment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean would contribute to the preservation of international peace and security.

10. At the same time, the legitimate security concerns of the countries of the Indian Ocean region could not be ignored. Those countries should play a leading role in the establishment of the zone of peace. His delegation fully supported the proposal for a step-by-step approach to that goal. Such an approach could serve as a confidence-building measure for the countries of the region. A meeting of the States of the region was an essential step and would enable those countries to consider their security situation in the post-cold war era. Such a meeting would not duplicate but complement and revitalize the work of the Committee.

11. Mrs. BROWN-HAMMOND (Liberia) welcomed General Assembly resolution 47/59. The achievement of its objectives would be facilitated by the general improvement in international relations, especially the cessation of rivalry between the super-Powers and the rapid political changes in Europe which had created better opportunities for disarmament and the promotion of international peace and security.

12. Her delegation noted with regret the absence of several key members of the Committee. Since the successful completion of the Committee's work depended on

(Mrs. Brown-Hammond, Liberia)

a large extent on their active participation, she urged them to return and encouraged the Chairman to continue holding informal consultations with those delegations.

13. She shared the view that the maintenance of peace and security and stability in the Indian Ocean was vital, not only to the countries of the region, but to the world as a whole. Accordingly, her delegation supported the recommendation to convene a conference of the States of the Indian Ocean region to review the situation in the region, taking into account recent developments in international relations. She agreed that the Committee should review the 20 substantive elements proposed for consideration at the United Nations Conference on the Indian Ocean contained in document A/46/29 and update the list in accordance with recent developments.

14. Mr. NYAKI (United Republic of Tanzania) said it was regrettable that some members of the Committee were absent from the session in spite of the concerted efforts by the Chairman and the delegation of Australia to convince them to rejoin the Committee. His delegation welcomed back the delegation of the Netherlands.

15. Although the Declaration reflected certain elements of the cold war era which were no longer relevant, that was equally true of other important United Nations documents, including the Charter. It was for that reason that Member States had embarked on a process of restructuring and revitalizing the United Nations, taking into account the changes that had occurred in the international system. The United Nations had, to a large extent, been designed to address the global issues in the years after the Second World War, yet no Member State had called for its demise; instead, all Members were working together in a spirit of cooperation and partnership for the sake of a stronger and more efficient Organization. The Committee should approach General Assembly resolution 47/59 in that spirit.

16. There had already been some progress in establishing a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean. The virtual elimination of great Power rivalry in the area, albeit not the outcome of a deliberate decision by the major nuclear-weapon States, was a positive step in that direction. However, despite the greatly improved global environment and increased trust and cooperation among nations, an external military presence persisted in the region, creating suspicion and a sense of insecurity.

17. It was important for the Committee to reaffirm the basic goal of the Declaration as it began its search for new, alternative approaches to that instrument's implementation. His delegation supported the idea of convening a meeting of littoral and hinterland States which would review the 20 substantive elements for consideration at the United Nations Conference on the Indian Ocean.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.